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TO: Representative Paul Condino
Judiciary Committee

FROM: Terrill Struttman
President
Harrison's Hope

DATE: January 30, 2008

SUBJECT: Support of HB 4872 and 4873 Relating to Unattended Children in Motor Vehicles

TEXT OF TESTIMONY

Dear Representatives:

I am writing today to encourage your support of HB 4872 and HB 4873. This legislation would establish a motor vehicle violation in Michigan for leaving children unattended in a motor vehicle.

Each year a significant number of children are left unattended in vehicles. Most people think that nothing bad can happen, but it is a risk that is greatly underestimated. Risks can and do include abduction, heat stroke, setting a vehicle in motion, strangulation from power accessories and even fatal car crashes.

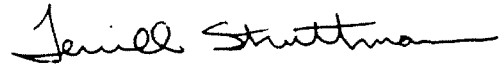
Unfortunately, I am an expert on this issue. On May 30, 1998, my wife, Michele, and our two-year-old son Harrison, were spending the day at Harrison's favorite riverfront park. They were seated on a park bench watching boats on the Missouri River. In the parking lot behind them, two children, ages two and three, had been left unattended inside a van with the motor running. One of the children made his way to the driver's seat and was pretending to drive. He accidentally shifted the van into drive, which sent the vehicle on a direct path toward the park bench occupied by Michele and Harrison. When Michele realized a van was headed towards them in the middle of a park, she lunged for Harrison, but there was not enough time for them to get out of the van's path. They were both hit by the van careening toward them. Our son Harrison died later that evening and my wife is still recovering from her physical injuries.

Since then, my wife and I have formed Harrison's Hope. We are dedicated to preventing similar tragedies. No state or federal agency is tracking this issue, so we

maintain a national database tracking the number of injuries and deaths to children left alone inside motor vehicles. Since 1998, Harrison's Hope has documented over 3,433 incidents involving 4,592 children resulting in 896 deaths nationwide of children left alone inside a vehicle. For more information regarding this serious safety issue and our organization, please visit our website at www.harrissonshope.org.

HB 4872 and HB 4873 will improve the safety of children in Michigan. This legislation is not intended to be punitive - but rather, it aims to educate well-meaning parents and caregivers who are not aware of the deadly consequences of such action. Harrison's Hope urges you to protect Michigan's children and support HB 4872 and HB 4873.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terrill Struttman", with a stylized, flowing script.

Terrill Struttman
President
Harrison's Hope